

LAW ENFORCEMENT MUTUAL AID PLAN (SAR) ANNEX



MUTUAL AID GUIDELINES

SEARCH AND RESCUE TRACKER

June 4, 2009

California Emergency Management Agency
Law Enforcement Branch
Search and Rescue Mutual Aid – Tracker Guidelines

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This document is the product of a cooperative effort of an assembled Search and Rescue Ground Team Specialist Working Group and the California's State Sheriff's Search and Rescue Coordinators.

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Introduction

Pursuant to the California Government Code, Chapter 7 of Division 1 of Title 2, “The Emergency Services Act”, the Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (OES), Law Enforcement Branch manages and maintains the State of California Search and Rescue Mutual Aid Program. This includes the publication of plans pertaining to Search and Rescue Mutual Aid. This publication, The California OES SAR Mutual Aid Plan, serves as an annex to the California OES Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Plan.

In order to refine the State’s Search and Rescue Mutual Aid Program, the OES Law Enforcement Branch assembled California’s 58 County Sheriffs’ Search and Rescue Coordinators, as well as California’s State and Federal SAR Cooperators. This group of interested agencies is called the “State Sheriffs’ Search and Rescue Coordinators”. The main objective of this group is to collectively review and address statewide SAR issues to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the State’s SAR Mutual Aid Program.

One of the main issues identified was the existence of multiple and inconsistent “standards” that affect the SAR discipline, specifically mutual aid SAR responses. The lack of statewide consistency in how SAR resources were evaluated and categorized made it difficult for SAR resources to be used as a mutual aid resource. This issue was addressed in detail by the State Sheriffs’ SAR Coordinators. Their objective was to create mutual aid guidelines that met or exceeded existing applicable “standards” while creating an effective and efficient statewide criteria for mutual aid SAR responses. These guidelines are intended to define SAR proficiencies solely for mutual aid resources.

- These guidelines contain information for law enforcement agencies to consider when addressing the broad range of issues related to Search and Rescue Mutual Aid. These guidelines do not constitute a policy, nor are they intended to establish a standard for any agency. OES is sensitive to the needs for agencies to have individualized policies that reflect concern for local issues. OES intends these guidelines to be a resource for law enforcement agencies that will provide maximum discretion and flexibility in the development of individual agency policies.

The creation of California’s SAR Mutual Aid Guidelines encompass all potential SAR disciplines and are developed as follows:

1. The State Sheriffs’ SAR Coordinators identify the guideline discipline need.
2. The State Sheriffs’ SAR Coordinators elect one of their fellow coordinators to chair the guideline creation process.
3. The State Sheriffs’ SAR Coordinators identify and task a group of subject matter experts into a “Specialist Working Group”.
4. The Specialist Working Group creates the guidelines based upon their knowledge and experience and submits them back to the coordinators for review, recommendation, and/or approval.
5. Once approved by the coordinators, and reviewed by OES Administration and Staff Counsel, the coordinators present the guidelines to the California State Sheriffs’ Association (CSSA) for their review, recommendation and/or approval.
6. Once approved by CSSA, the guidelines become part of the OES California Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Plan – SAR Annex.

Effectiveness and efficiency is achieved as California’s SAR Mutual Aid Guidelines are created by California’s SAR experts, for California’s Sheriff’s SAR Coordinators, and approved by the Sheriffs of California, all for the benefit of those who become the subjects of search and/or rescue in California’s SAR environments.

The following guidelines include “typing” of both the SAR environment as well as the SAR resource. They are designed to match the conditions, environment and possible length of deployment (normal operational periods should be 12 hours) as determined by the mutual aid requestor and the minimum equipment, experience, and skill level the responding agency should consider when sending SAR personnel.

The goal of “typing” is to be able to identify the largest number of SAR resources while minimizing the risk of placing an unsuitable SAR resource in an unsafe situation. The responding agencies’ liaison or leader shall have final approval of any assignments their personnel are asked to perform.

Volunteer SAR personnel should be properly registered as Disaster Service Workers (DSW). DSW registration will ensure that the volunteers are eligible for worker’s compensation coverage if they should be injured and provides additional liability protection for the volunteer and the government agency.

NOTE: The endeavor of Search and Rescue necessitates response into difficult and unpredictable circumstances in widely varied and many times hazardous terrain. These guidelines are intended to assist Search and Rescue Coordinators in identifying appropriate emergency response resources to effect searches and rescues in the most expeditious manner possible while considering known and unknown hazards. These guidelines are not intended to address all eventualities. Rather they are a set of tools derived from collective knowledge to address the task at hand. Search and Rescue is inherently dangerous and participants respond with knowledge of the associated risks.

It is the responsibility of agencies responding to California Search and Rescue Mutual Aid requests to provide qualified personnel and equipment that meet or exceed the recommended level of skills and capabilities stipulated in these guideline documents.

The California SAR Mutual Aid Guidelines are only minimum guidelines and circumstances that are unique to a particular search and rescue mission may dictate that additional or higher skills and qualifications may be necessary for the safety of the searcher and for successful search and rescue operations.

Summary

A Tracking Team usually consists of three persons trained in the specific skills of human tracking and sign cutting. Tracking Teams generally work independently of other types of teams involved in the search and rescue effort, and normally in a capacity that has the capability of determining the overall conduct or direction of the search. It cannot be overemphasized that tracking is best utilized in the early stages of a search when evidence (sign / clues) is least contaminated by well-meaning searchers.

Because of the specialized nature of tracking, and the vital importance that it can play, tracking team members must possess highly specialized skills. The importance of specific, on-going training and skills development cannot be over emphasized. Whether or not tracking can be effective in a particular environment or situation should be the decision of the most qualified tracker. Although wilderness or urban environments should not be a major factor when requesting professionally trained trackers, Type 1 and occasionally Type 2 trackers will have the most field experience in more varied terrain and climate zones.

Tracking team members need to be well trained and experienced in all search and rescue disciplines, and have the tenacity to undertake a difficult tracking mission, and follow it through to conclusion. Trackers experienced in law enforcement and investigations are well suited for criminal evidence or fugitive searches and may not be trained in all search and rescue disciplines.

Tracking Environment Type			
Type 1 Extreme / Complex Environment	Type 2 Rugged Environment	Type 3 Moderate / Gentle Environment	Type 4 Gentle Environment
All terrains, wilderness, back country to urban. Highly contaminated, minimal or old sign. Crime scenes, complex problems, day and night.	Most terrains, some contamination of sign. Rural, off road or trail. Not highly traveled, moderate problems, day and night.	Uncontaminated open field areas, natural light.	Open fields, streets, parking lots, residential yards, natural or artificial lighting.

Recommended Capabilities and Skills				
	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4
Deployed to Environment Type	1/2/3/4	2/3/4	3/4	4
Tracking Skills	Highly contaminated sign. Identify specific footprints, Track multiple subjects, Complicated routing and areas, in Severe weather. Identify conflicting witness statements. Employ advanced tracking techniques, sign cutting. Identify physical and mental characteristics of the sign maker. With the policies and procedures of the authorizing agency in mind perform an organized, systematic examination of all evidence at a crime scene. Coordinate and brief teams, Effect team leadership of multiple teams. Type 2, 3 and 4 capabilities and skills.	Moderately contaminated sign. Identify specific footprints. Verify sign aging, direction of travel and number of persons. Employ multiple sign cutting teams, including perimeter and double team techniques. Recognize, identify, define and describe simple ageing observed. Track one or more persons at and from a specific site. Identify prints along a sign line. Describe obvious individual sign maker characteristics. Report writing, Court testimony. Type 3 and 4 capabilities and skills.	Uncontaminated sign. Locate and identify footprints. Use general tracking terms and definitions to correctly identify various types of sign. Communicate to others by using proper drawings and measurements of subject footprints. Able to assist type 1 and 2 in complex track environment. Set up and use a tracking stick. Field experience at three person team tracking in active, moving sign. Marking, preserving and identifying tracks. Recognize characteristics from different types of footgear impressions, in various ground conditions. Type 4 capabilities and skills.	Ability to obtain incident critical information from authorities and witnesses as appropriate. Ability to advise of additional tracker resources needed. Use the accepted tracking terms and definitions to correctly identify and communicate to others, the tracking signs found in the field. Make acceptable drawings and measurements of the subject's footprints.
Operation Periods w/o External Support	Multiple operational periods without external support.	Two operational periods without external support.	One 12 hour operational period without external support.	One 8 hour operational period.
Medical Skills	Current First Aid / CPR, First Responder or EMT recommended.	Current First Aid / CPR	Current First Aid/CPR	Current First Aid /CPR

Radio Communications	In addition to requirements for Type 2, team members should have additional training in the use of radios under difficult conditions.	Familiar with basic radio communications skills. Understand the use of Mutual Aid Radio Frequencies and basic radio etiquette.	Familiar with basic radio communications skills. Understand the use of Mutual Aid Radio Frequencies and basic radio etiquette.	Familiar with basic radio communications and radio etiquette skills.
Knowledge of NIMS/SEMS/ICS	Current NIMS/SEMS requirement	Current NIMS/SEMS requirement	Current NIMS/SEMS requirement	Must be familiar with ICS.
Helicopter Operations	Basic helicopter safety. Knowledge and familiarity with hot and cold, loading / unloading and establishing a landing site. Knowledge of short haul/hoist.	Basic helicopter safety. Knowledge and familiarity with hot and cold, loading / unloading and establishing a landing site. Knowledge of short haul/hoist.	Basic helicopter safety. Knowledge and familiarity with hot and cold, loading / unloading and establishing a landing site. Knowledge of short haul/hoist.	Basic helicopter safety. Knowledge and familiarity with hot and cold, loading / unloading and establishing a landing site.
Navigation	Determine and communicate position, navigate point to point with GPS and map/compass, route finding.	Determine and communicate position, navigate point to point with GPS and map/compass, route finding.	Determine and communicate position, navigate point to point with GPS and map/compass, route finding.	Determine and communicate position, street address, intersection or location.
Fitness	Fitness appropriate for conditions, terrain and mission.	Fitness appropriate for conditions, terrain and mission.	Fitness appropriate for conditions, terrain and mission.	Fitness appropriate for conditions, terrain and mission.
Rope Skills	Basic rope safety, low angle rope skills. Self evacuation.	Basic rope safety, low angle rope skills. Self evacuation.	Knowledge of basic knots. Assist with packaging and litter work.	None required
Crime Scene Protection	Familiar with basic crime scene protection, chain of evidence and documentation.	Familiar with basic crime scene protection, chain of evidence and documentation.	Familiar with basic crime scene protection, chain of evidence and documentation.	Familiar with basic crime scene protection, chain of evidence and documentation.
Personal / Team Equipment	See Appendix E	See Appendix E	See Appendix E	Equipment appropriate for immediate mission.

Appendix A

Suggested tracking team equipment:

Tracking Specific Equipment	Team	Individual
Tracking stick with 3 rubber bands		X
Measuring device (small tape measure suggested)		X
Notebook, tracking cards, writing instrument, flagging		X
Inter-Team radios (FRS or similar)		X
Incident wide radio equipment (Agency radio)	X	
24 hour pack (Type 2 and 3 teams)		X
72 hour pack (Type 1 team)		X
GPS	X	
Digital Camera	X	
Flashlight with standard bulb (non-LED)		X
Mirror		X